eBook

6 Essential Elements to Develop a Learner Experience PLAYBOOK

GPStrategies®

Table of **Contents**

Business and the **Evolving** Workforce

Not only have employee expectations for organizations changed, but the entire ecosystem for the when, where, and how we work and learn is being disrupted. The nature of work, employee motivations, and the environment for how work is done are all changing. This is a time in modern history where disruptive change has occurred across all three of those elements.

We are seeing disruption across all three elements of the organization–the work, the worker, and the work environment. Employee expectations have changed–when and where they work and learn is still evolving. To respond to these disruptive changes, business leaders need to take a systemic view of those elements and how their organization is rethinking them to engage their employees. Every element is a key piece in creating a brand-aligned experience for your employees.

Disruption is happening across all **three elements:**

The Work

The Worker

The Work Environment

Challenges for Learning in a **Disrupted** Workforce

Escalating technology needs, hybrid working, developing future skills, responding to customer needs, and others are creating a repeating series of challenges for learning leaders.

Learning Culture

Transfer and Productivity

Learning Technology

Team Development

Collaboration

Digital Fatigue

Moments of Learning Need

Equitable Access

These are ultimately leading to the singular challenge of creating an effective learning experience for employees who expect a clear level of sophistication for learning programs at work.

# From a Brand Breaking Experience to a **Brand Making** Experience

Consider the next two examples of a new employee experience. **Which one have you experienced?**

New Employee Experience A

- No manager connection on first day
- The computer has not yet arrived, is late, or has limited access
- Somehow, the employee is already "overdue" for compliance training
- The employee is scheduled for a full day of webinars and eLearning
- The employee is not sure who to go to for help or to ask questions

New Employee Experience B

- The new employee is greeted with a pre-board welcome and matched with a mentor (other than their immediate supervisor)
- Sits at an ergonomic workstation with connected technology in place
- Lunch with manager on the first day
- Mobile, agile, personalized learning path
- Access to an intuitive team collaboration site with a warm team greeting

Watch Video
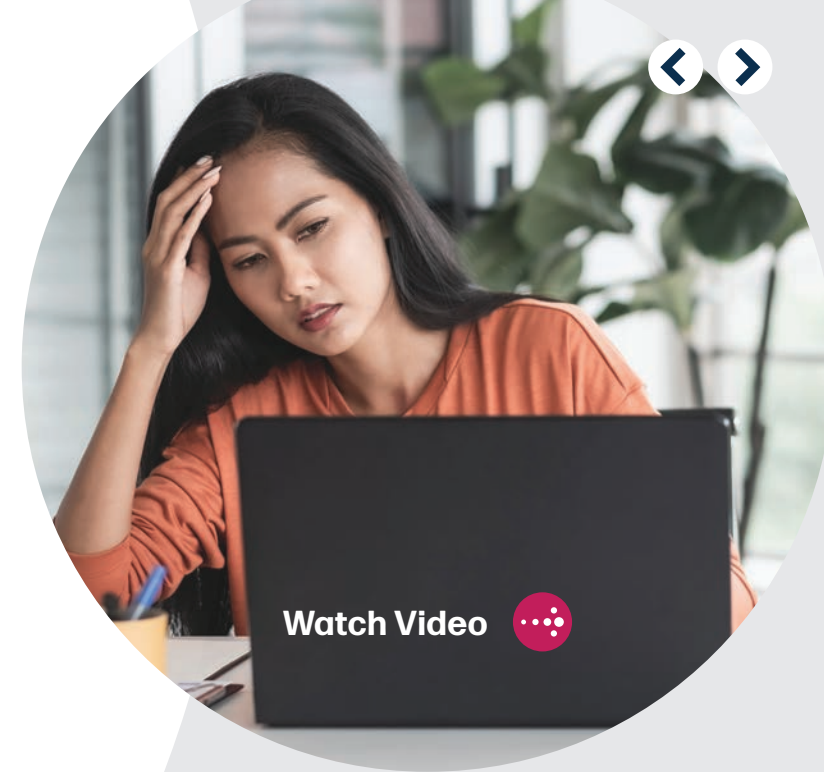
The **key takeaway** is that to have a truly brand-aligned learner experience, you to need think about how each feature of the learning organization needs to align. If your company has a customer experience playbook, you will recognize how the businesspeople, processes, and technology align to create a consistently great customer experience.

Most companies have a form of a customer experience playbook, and a lot of thought and effort goes into it. It is incredibly difficult and costly to recover from the *New Employee Experience A* and companies need to take this playbook approach with their own employee experience.

Why Do You Need a Learner Experience Playbook?

A learner experience playbook helps learning leaders design and deliver holistic learning programs across an organization. It helps define, drive, and adapt the learning culture. While a customer experience playbook creates those "wow" moments for your customers, organizations need to do the same to create those moments for employees.

A learner experience playbook can do all this while nurturing a culture that reinforces defining moments that are positive, engaging, and empowering. This approach ultimately elevates the workforce-brand experience and will help create a culture of more engaged employees.

Through six steps, a learning experience playbook **helps an organization**:

- Ensure alignment between company brand and learning brand.

- Create a consistent learning experience across an organization.

- Allow L&D solutions to flex with continuous evolution of the work, worker, and work environment.

- Integrate new technologies effectively without creating a negative learner experience.

The **6 Elements** of a Learner Experience **Playbook**

The learner experience playbook provides creator guidance to these questions:

1. How do you leverage and reinforce the learning culture?
2. What does good look like for a desired experience?
3. How will you align with learners from different business units?
4. How will you design and develop an experience?
5. How will you engage and communicate with the learners?
6. What technology will you use and how will it be applied?
7. What roles will you add to ensure an equitable learning experience?
8. How will you measure the experience?

1 Learner segmentation and representative personas

2 Narrative of the broader learner journey

3 Alignment with business outcomes

4 Key learner touchpoints

5 Mapping the learner environment

6 Measurement and feedback

Element

01

Learner Segmentation & Representative Personas

1 Learner Segmentation & Representative Personas

Who are you designing for?

Capture insights about your target learners, stakeholders, and performance support network.

Who are the real stakeholders? The following expands beyond traditional learning stakeholders. Map them out with these guidelines:

Learner Target Audience | Create learner personas for your target audience and the skills and goals of the learning program. These personas can be representative and don't have to be complete. They need to be updated regularly and should help capture and identify trends.

"A" or Top Performers | Identify and analyze who is performing the job very well. Learn about the behaviors and skills of your top performers and use them to create a rubric and the goals of your learning programs.

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) | Outline the contributors and stakeholders for the content and context.

Performance Support Network | Map out all the people that enable the work experience. For a new employee onboarding program, this would include identifying the onboarding manager, the group support designee or administrator, the human resources representative, the recruiter and career guide, and mentor. This provides clarity and a system of support personnel for a range of learner experiences.

Business Stakeholders | Work with these stakeholders to articulate the program's goals and how they align with the greater business needs.

By defining these points, learning teams will broaden their base of stakeholders which will provide a fully informed and multi-dimensional perspective when developing learning programs.

Learner Target Audience
- Learner characteristics
- Learning solution's effectiveness

"A" Performers
- Key performance outputs
- Performance criteria
- Performance context

SMEs
- Content
- Context

Performance Support Network
- Key support characteristics
- Performance support elements

Business Stakeholders
- Business success criteria
- Performance flow

Element
02

Narrative of the Broader Learner Journey

Narrative of the Broader Learner Journey

What does good look like?

Define the features and elements of an outstanding learner experience. Use personas from the previous component to help contextualize your guiding principles. The following are sample guiding principles and a great place to start, but it's a best practice to develop your own set of guiding principles based on your organization, your brand, and your goals. It must be meaningful to your needs and make the experience feel authentic and aligned.

1 Establish Relevancy

Every component and resource developed should be highly relevant and tie back to the company. Each piece should clearly connect with employees' individual and organizational goals.

2 Create Connections

Every component, large or small, should contribute to humanizing the experience, from providing the platforms and technologies for participants to collaborate to sharing stories.

3 Respect Time

Learner time is valuable. Learning content is more available than ever before, but employees have less time to consume it. Creating time with manager buy-in is critical.

4 Generate Pull

Make learning easy to access, intuitive, and give employees a reason to return.

5 Enable Insights

Capture and catalog data such as how learners interact with each component, how much employees collaborate, and how performance changes. Use these insights to inform the next design iteration.

Element

03

Alignment with Business Outcomes

Alignment with Business Outcomes

3

What are you helping them solve, achieve, and perform?

Start a progressive conversation about observable points that relate to your program and plan how to continuously collect information from them. Note what your business naturally collects and what you might be able to add to what you collect. While this element sets the groundwork for measurement, it should connect to element six, where the impact is more formally realized.

Creating a Measurement Map™ will provide a path for how a program performs. The Measurement Map is a tool to define the ideal metrics to show business impact.

Work your way back from the business results to the leading behaviors and indicators up to the investment. This map is a method to look at the solution put in place. The main point of the map you create should be to develop a causal logic chain showing the impact of the training solution. You should be able to answer the question, "Is the learning investment contributing to the numbers?"

The following is an example of a high-level outline Measurement Map™ for job site safety training. In this example, the map provides the answer to, *"Is the learning investment contributing positively to the business results?"*

For more on measurement, learn about the Measurement Academy. **Learn more**

04

Key Learner Touchpoints

4 Key Learner Touchpoints

Engagement, entry, re-entry. Moments of learning need.

Describe learning in terms of continuous experiences compared to discrete events. Once this is accomplished, map out the key learner touchpoints.

Traditionally, learning was more singularly focused, such as a one-hour eLearning course with a brief assessment at the end. Modern learners have since changed how they prefer to learn. Technology was also more singularly focused. Organizations historically tracked employees individually in learning management systems, but those systems have evolved and are being used more holistically within organizations.

As a result, learning needs to be offered in a journey over time and in varying formats to reach them at multiple moments of learning need. Learning journeys create engaging experiences employees can access as needed or as they have availability to learn and practice skills.

In other words, traditional instructional design is a systematic approach to creating an instructional output. But by focusing on the systematic, designers lose the systemic. In a modern learning experience, designers need to build the system, the learning resources, and the components offered and available through the journey. By creating a learning journey, designers are creating a space that pulls learners in and helps them take ownership of their learning.

The following graphic for Sarah's Journey can help demonstrate this idea with the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI).

Learning Journey Components

Practical tools and tips for both employees and leaders

Common EI definition and principles

Curated Skill Plan

Emotional Intelligence Chatbot

Testimonial videos and podcasts from influencers

Virtual community and support to build EI champions

A Leader and Manager's Toolkit with activities for their team

Interactive quizzes and scenarios to offer insight and opportunities to practice

Communications reaching employees where they're at including AR engagement memes

Sarah's Journey

The following is a quick summary of the learning experience. The journey is based in a curation instance and includes a rich base of micro assets and online and offline activities.

How do you bring calm and reason to your team?

She accesses and watches the Emotional Intelligence animation, and testimonials from her peers and leaders.

As part of the experience, she opens the 30 days of EI calendar and sets up an Outlook task to look at it each day.

Over the course of the month, she reads articles and downloads one of the How To Guides.

Her attention is grabbed when she sees a sign in the elevator: Stressed out? Improve your Emotional Intelligence, using an AR app to begin the journey.

She takes the EI self assessment and opts into the EI Chat Bot.

Over the course of the month, she joins and collaborates in an Emotional Intelligence community space.

She saw in the EI Group that more content is coming. She can't wait.

Element
05

Mapping the Learner Environment

5 Mapping the Learner Environment

Support at point of work and throughout the environment.

Mapping the learner environment can be accomplished in two key areas: Identifying and developing new roles for the connected learning organization and creating the organization's work-learning ecosystem.

New Roles for the Connected Learning Organization

Learning teams need to think of their employees as learning consumers, more like customers, and then adapt their teams' skills to effectively develop learning.

To identify new and emerging roles for learning, it helps to start with the moments of learning need and how they define learning roles in a modern learning context.

Learning teams must consider new and emerging roles like these as technologies and disruptions change how we learn. Growing the learning team with new ideas, functions, and skills will help keep pace with learning innovations and create a healthy design for the learner environment.

Watch Video

Moments of Learning Need

1. Learning for the first time
2. Learning more
3. Applying & refining
4. Adjusting to change
5. Reacting to failure

Emerging Moments:

1. Innovating
2. Growing for next role

Expanded Learner Roles

1. Consumer
2. Moderator
3. Curator
4. Contributor
5. Creator
6. Collaborator

### Connected Organization Learning Roles

1. Learning connectors
2. Learning bridgers
3. Specialists for coaching and mentoring
4. Information brokers

The Work-Learning Ecosystem

Once the roles are defined, learning teams need to define their work-learning ecosystem. The work-learning ecosystem is a map of the technologies an organization uses and where employees access each technology within the context of learning and performing work tasks. The map provides insights into how learning programs can be created to work across the organization and where components and modules of the program can be deployed most effectively.

This will look different for each organization depending on the culture, process, and technologies in place. The following is a sample of a work-learning ecosystem.
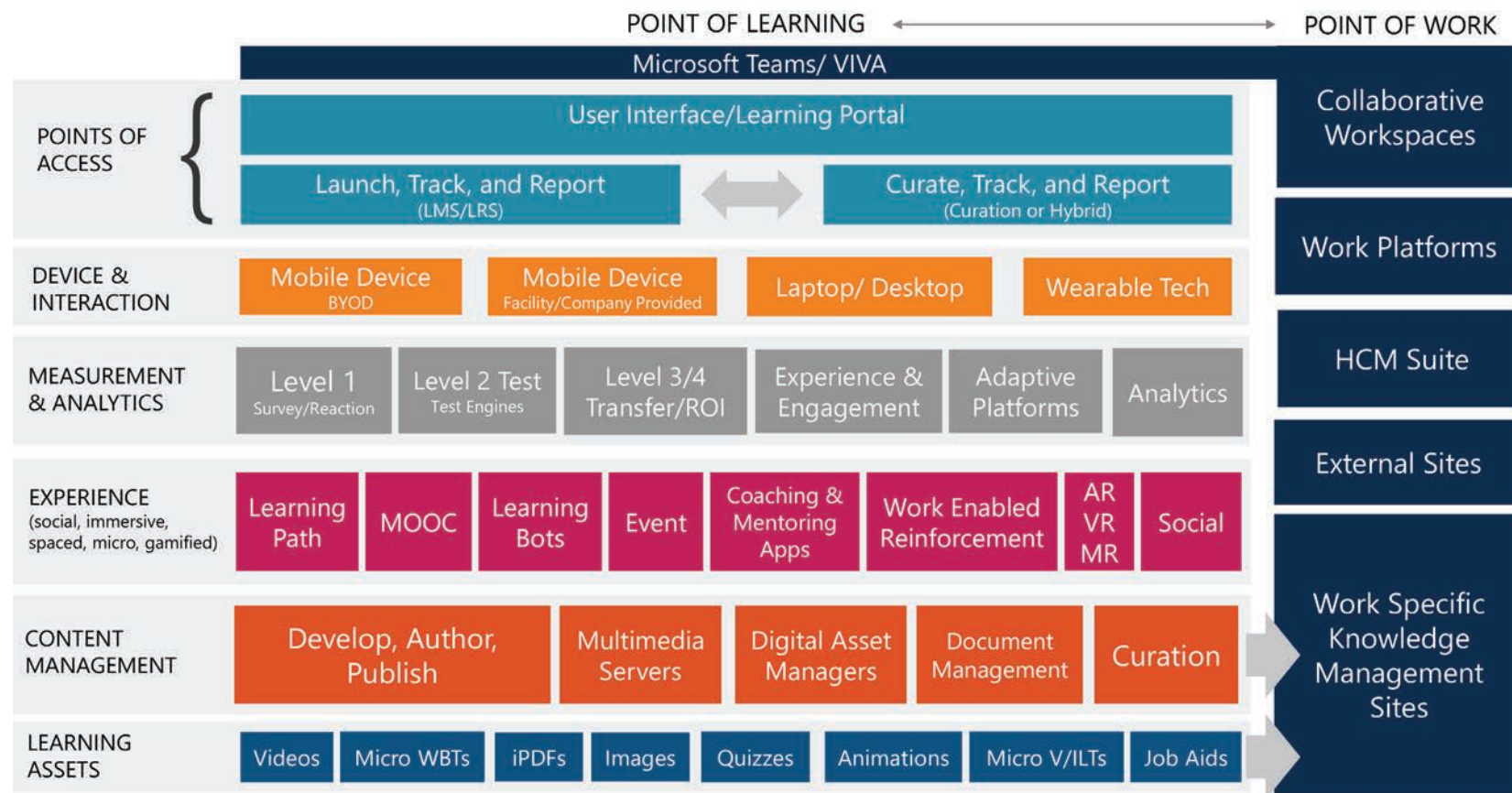
Element
06

Measurement & Feedback

6 Measurement & Feedback

Proving and improving the experience.

What you can measure depends on your program. It's important to build in opportunities to measure multiple data points that can provide insight into the success of each program. Here are some sample metrics to capture:

- Social interactions
- Learner reviews
- Business results
- Learner contributions
- Learner help requests and response times
- Learner satisfaction scores
- Number of engagements
- Net promoter scores

These data points should connect to your Measurement Map from element three.

By creating a learner experience playbook, learning leaders will have the map to create a culture of learning and more engaged employees, ultimately leading to a better brand experience for their people and their customers.

About the Author

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Matt Donovan is the Chief Learning and Innovation Officer and is a recognized name in learning, bringing more than 25 years of experience crafting learner-centric solutions and leading high-impact development teams. He has a background in instructional design and often leads workshops, speaks at global events, and has won many industry awards, including being named one of Training Magazine's Top 10 International Trainers under 40.

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